



Why was the sinking of the Titanic a disaster?



OBJECTIVE 1

To use historical evidence related to the sinking of Titanic to reach a causal conclusion.

OBJECTIVE 2

To reach an evaluative judgement as to why Titanic is viewed as a historic disaster.

Summary of lesson

This lesson looks at the actual sinking of the ship and why it then became an event in history that can be categorised as a disaster. The lesson is broken into 3 parts:

- 1 Basic breakdown of the ship
- 2 How it actually sank
- 3 Why it became a 'disaster'

The first two parts can be completed relatively quickly, but the main task is looking at why it is an event in history that can be categorised as 'disaster', with a breakdown of what this means as well as links to other events.

RESOURCES REQUIRED

The resources for this lesson are optional but slides can be taken and used at various points to support knowledge and understanding.

- Images (taken from the slides) for students to either have in their books to refer to.
- The task on slide 11 can be made into a table/other format if it is easier.

National Curriculum links

This lesson provided the opportunity for students to:

- study of an aspect or site in local history dating from a period before 1066
- gain historical perspective by placing their growing knowledge into different contexts with a focus on the concept of a 'disaster'.

There are clear links for schools in Southampton and along the South Coast. This may also be useful for schools in regions which also have connections to Titanic such as Liverpool and Merseyside, Belfast, Cobh and Cork.

Lesson guidance

Five parts

PART Why was the ship thought to be 'unsinkable'?

1 The lesson is almost split into two parts. The first part looks at why the ship was considered to be 'unsinkable'. This is done through looking at her construction, design and a newspaper article from the time, as well as how this was countered by the ship building company that built the ship. Slides 2, 3, 4 and 5 look into the different reasons for why people thought that it was unsinkable and students can break each of these down. For example, on slide 2 it is important to note that there were 'watertight compartments'.

Questions can be asked around why newspapers have such an impact and so why the belief was widely held, as well as questions around why it was so important for people to believe that it was unsinkable. Can also link to the industrial revolution if this has been previously studied. Slides here can be printed out and annotated if required.

PART How did it sink?

2 The second part of the lesson looks at why it eventually did sink. The video on slide 6 explains how the ship sank, looking at and linking to the construction and design of the ship as well as some of the technology on board. Students could use this to write notes/questions on what happened as the ship went down. It would be worth spending a bit of time on this as it breaks down well the sinking event itself.

PART What makes an event a disaster?

3 Then students are going to begin to break down the definition of a disaster and look at all the ways the sinking of the Titanic became one. This could also be moved to closer to the start of the lesson depending on how key terms, words or language are taught. Examples of other disasters could be given to give students comparison to other events, such as a volcanic eruption.

PART Why was the ship unprepared?

4 Students are then going to watch another short video on all the reasons for why the ship was unprepared to deal with different events happening, which will lead them to think about why this became such a massive incident. This can be mind-mapped or bullet-pointed, whichever way the teacher prefers. Students could find links between different reasons as well as think of any questions they might have for why these things weren't sorted and/or why it ended as it did.

PART Sort the evidence

5 Lastly, using the information they have collected as well as new information on the board, they are going to categorise their ideas into the following sections:

Before departure

During the collision

After the collision

Things to consider here would be questions around:

- 1 Could this have been avoided?
- 2 If so, how?
- 3 How would people feel if they knew the Titanic was not prepared as well as it could have been?

On Slide 12, there is a quote from a passenger from the ship and this can be discussed if there is time.